00491

1970/05/02

Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

CN: 321Q
RECD: 02 MAY 70
358 AM

P 020700Z MAY 70
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 639
RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY SAIGON 331
BT
S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 700

NODIS/KHMER

1. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL SRAY SAMAN AND U SAY MORNING MAY 2 MADE URGENT REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN CONVOYING MERCHANT SHIPS ON THE MEKONG. I DID NOT GATHER WHETHER THEY WISHED THIS ON A CONTINUING BASIS BUT FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE THEY MENTIONED THE PROBLEM OF GETTING FIVE MERCHANT SHIPS WHICH PRESENTLY IN PHNOM PENH DOWN RIVER. APPARENTLY CAMBODIANS ABLE PROTECT THEM MOST OF DISTANCE BUT THERE IS ONE STRETCH FROM PREK-DACH (WT256355) TO THE FRONTIER WHICH IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS SINCE NAVIGATION CHANNEL IS ONLY 20 METERS FROM SHORE LINED WITH VC.

2. GENERALS DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT KIND OF PROTECTION THEY WISHED TO RECEIVED, WHETHER NAVAL PATROL BOATS OR FROM AIR.

3. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENTS AND SAIGON'S VIEWS REGARDING THIS HELP AT LEAST ON A ONE TIME BASIS AND HOW IT COULD BEST BE EFFECTED. WE NOTE IT WOULD AGAIN POSE PROBLEM OF ENTERING INTO CAMBODIAN TERRITORY.

COMMENT: IT IS EVIDENT THAT PROBLEM OF SAFETY ON RIVER IS ABOUT TO CAUSE NEW PROBLEM FOR CAMBODIA, ESPECIALLY PHNOM PENH, SINCE IMPORTANT QUANTITIES OF GOODS NORMALLY ENTER CAMBODIA THROUGH THIS CHANNEL. UNLESS SECURITY PROBLEM RESOLVED SHORTLY IT WILL ALSO POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR EMBASSY WHICH EXPECTING CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE.

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